

## Kent Community Learning Trust

### Update on progress: March 2013

The Kent Community Learning Trust (CLT) is exploring the value and impact of working together as a local government led partnership, in particular with the voluntary and community sector, further and higher education providers, and the private sector to create long-term and sustainable relationships for the benefit of the local community. Partners have developed proposals to support the CLT's three main themes: social cohesion, volunteering, and engaging disadvantaged learners, with the aim of using community learning as a tool for improving social cohesion and bringing learning closer to the community by listening to the learner voice. An informal stakeholder group meets to identify opportunities for partnership working to better meet community learning needs and links with forums through which communities can engage with decision making and engagement activities to build community confidence including links with the Community Learning Innovation Fund (CLIF) project to look at ways of sharing volunteers in order to engage disabled people in local democracy. Student Ambassadors and Tesco Community Learning Champions will support the CLT's efforts to improve adult learning whilst strengthening the relationships between partners and their local communities.

The CLT is building on past experience and existing good practice to support and evolve ongoing partnership working including three projects to support its main themes. The first of these, working in collaboration with Amicus Horizon (a community interest social housing provider), aims to build residents' confidence and self esteem in the use of the internet and technology to better access online services and prepare for the implementation of Universal Credit. In addition, older learners with Kent Adult Education are incentivised to access and purchase courses on-line as part of the CLT's Pound Plus strategy and in support of another aspect of the drive to access services online.

For the second project, research conducted by Canterbury Christ Church University and other partners, including Kent Adult Education and the WEA, will help to pilot more creative arts and liberal arts courses with partners working to support and engage both hard to reach communities and marginalised learners, and those learners who can afford to pay as part of the CLT's Pound Plus strategy. To further support this work the CLT is also developing a 'progression framework' for community engagement, spanning levels 1 to post-graduate, which will include modular CPD training for the workforce and volunteers.

The third project, 'learning through gardening', has adopted an intergenerational approach through a number of volunteering strands in partnership with Amicus Horizon and the University of Kent. A network of 'Green' Champions and Ambassadors made up of staff and resident volunteers, as well as undergraduate Student Ambassadors, will support residents in developing gardening projects, skills, and horticultural knowledge. A community interest company has also been commissioned to engage with this work, which will provide gardening services undertaken by young people with disabilities for the residents, thereby offering the young people opportunities to engage in community activity whilst addressing the social and community needs identified by Amicus Horizon.